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Current Literature.

Science and the Flood.

In an article on this subject in the June number of the *Expositor*, Professor T. G. Bonney, LL.D., F.R.S., expresses himself as in disagreement with the late Sir J. W. Dawson and with Sir H. H. Howorth in their defense of the Genesis story of the flood which destroyed mankind. He admits that the flood story gains some strength from the widespread general tradition of such an event, not only in the book of Genesis, but outside in the traditions of other peoples. But the evidence of geology, he holds, is strongly against the actual occurrence of such a flood. All the indications point to a progress in civilization of the race or races; a change in the fauna, perhaps corresponding to some alteration of climate; and a gradual disappearance of extinct forms with an incoming of living forms. So that the idea of a universal deluge, or even of closely connected but local deluges on a large scale, cannot in his judgment claim any real support from geology.

The Famous Code of Hammurabi.

In a paper read recently before the American Oriental Society by Professor Christopher Johnston, of Johns Hopkins University, the importance of this newly discovered code was discussed. In his judgment no monument of antiquity has ever been discovered, either in western Asia or in Egypt, which exceeds this one in interest and importance. It is the oldest of all law codes in existence, and must henceforth form a starting-point for the systematic study of historical jurisprudence.

Hammurabi, the compiler of the code, was the sixth king of the first dynasty of Babylonia, and reigned for fifty-five years, about 2250 B. C. He is referred to in the Old Testament (Gen. 14 : 1) as Amraphel, and is there represented as a contemporary of Abraham. He was a most enterprising and efficient ruler, doing many things to advance civilization in his nation. Among other things he established courts of law everywhere, and gave his personal attention to the administration of justice. The Babylonians of a later date looked back upon his reign as the golden age of their history.

To what extent and in what manner Hammurabi made use of earlier codes in compiling his laws is at present difficult to decide. That he did so is to be presumed, and there are indications of the existence of such codes. He employed a legal phraseology which had become traditional in his time, and he may well have incorporated previously existing laws with little or no change of wording. It is unlikely that before his time there had been a uniform code of laws in force throughout all Babylonia. Hammurabi's great political achievement was the union of all Babylonia under a single monarchy, and its consolidation into a homogeneous whole. It seems, therefore, highly probable that he conceived the plan of replacing the conflicting laws of the individual states by a universal system which should be in force everywhere in his dominions. As the political organization which he created endured down to the time of the Persian conquest, so his code of laws remained the basis of Babylonian and Assyrian law until the fall of both empires.

Indeed, it had a far wider sphere of influence. An intimate connection is conclusively shown between this Babylonian code and the legislative codes which appear in the Bible; and it is striking that the parallels are most numerous and definite in the Book of the Covenant (Exod. 20: 22—23: 33), the oldest of the several biblical codes. It is not too much to say also, Professor Johnston adds, that the code of Hammurabi has had its effect upon the legal systems of the present day.

Tree-Worship in the Old Testament.

Rev. R. B. Taylor, of Aberdeen, Scotland, contributes an interesting article to the *Expository Times* for June on the "Traces of Tree-Worship in the Old Testament." There are many evidences, he says, that customs connected with tree-worship have been universal in Europe. If this is true where moisture and vegetation abound, we can well understand that in a land like Palestine, where trees were few, the worship paid to them was real and accentuated. The land around a spring green with vegetation was called "Baal's land." It was held sacrosanct, and the trees themselves were supposed to be endowed with the life of God. Cloth and votive offerings were hung upon the trees to secure the favor of the deity. It was natural that the Israelites, as part of the great Semitic stock, would be sharers in those beliefs that we find spread over a wide area of Asia. The old Testament presents numerous traces that tree-worship was still in vogue in the earlier